



Chapter 1



The NSW State Plan reflects the hopes and aspirations, and incorporates the wisdom and experience, of the NSW community.

The launch of the draft State Plan in August 2006 was followed by an extensive community consultation process to gather feedback on the priorities and strategies in the draft document. This process provided opportunities for the community to have their input and directly engage with Government Ministers and the senior leadership of the public service. It deliberately went beyond simply consulting with the official spokespeople and structures and reached out and communicated with the wider community.

The consultation process provided detailed feedback on the issues on which the community want the Government to focus its efforts. There was strong endorsement for developing a State Plan and a clear message that the community will judge the Government on its ability to deliver real progress.

The process also provided an opportunity for people to make critical comments. This was an important, democratic feature of the process. It allowed Ministers and officials to hear about people's frustrations and disappointments first hand.

As a consequence of the extensive consultation, a number of key changes have been made to the draft NSW State Plan to better reflect what the community wants from the Plan. These include a number of new priorities and revisions to draft priorities as well as a detailed chapter on how this Plan will be implemented. We have also added a chapter that reviews the key challenges for the State Plan in each region.

What the Community told Us

An overview of the process

In total, around 4000 people and organisations provided direct feedback on the State Plan, while around 50,000 people visited the State Plan website during the consultation process.

Community forums

31 forums were held across NSW from August 15 to September 13, 2006. Of these, 19 were held in regional centres while 12 were held in the Sydney metropolitan area.

Each forum comprised three separate meetings. The first was with Mayors and other local government representatives from the area. This was followed by a meeting with members of the community who were randomly selected for invitation. The final meeting was with a mix of local community leaders such as religious leaders, the heads of sporting and recreational groups and representatives of local non-government organisations.

The forums were attended by dozens of Mayors, over 1000 community members and over 750 community leaders.

Peak representative forums

Representatives from the state's top 100 peak groups attended a forum on August 25 to provide input into the Plan. The forum brought together some of our leading community voices in the fields of economic development, natural resources, the environment, transport, human services, arts, sport and criminal justice.

Two separate forums were also held with representatives of culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Sydney, and meetings were also held with the NSW Youth Advisory Council and the NSW Student Representative Council. State Government agencies also conducted their own consultations with their stakeholder groups. For example, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs held meetings with Aboriginal community representatives in regional NSW including Wagga Wagga, Albury, Bourke, Brewarrina and Weilmoringle, Inverell and Port Macquarie.

Submissions and feedback

Groups and individuals could also prepare written submissions on any aspect of the draft State Plan and over 300 detailed submissions were received.

A State Plan website was created to provide an outlet for downloading a copy of the draft Plan, or requesting a hard copy, and for completing a feedback form, 1247 feedback forms were completed.

What the

Community feedback

At every forum and on the website, people were asked to respond to the same five questions:

1. What is the NSW Government doing well in your area?
2. What could the NSW Government be doing better?
3. What do you see as the major challenge facing your area in the next 10 years?
4. Of the 29 priorities outlined in the draft State Plan, which are the most important?
5. Do you have any other comments on the draft State Plan?

All submissions were recorded and each one was reviewed and analysed to ensure that all ideas were considered.

We expected to hear critical observations in this process, but Government must be open to criticism and willing to learn from it. Overall, we were impressed by the informed and constructive nature of many of the comments received.

There was strong support for the development of a 10 year plan for the State that brings together the priorities and strategies of Government in one place. There was also positive feedback on the community consultation process with many people expressing their appreciation for being given a say on the key issues in their area and for the State. In particular, people welcomed the community forums being held in all parts of NSW. Many people expressed the hope that the Plan would be fully implemented across all Government agencies and would be closely integrated with other Plans and strategies across Government.



Community told Us

Government performance

The feedback on Government performance indicated that many people were satisfied with the performance of their local services such as schools and hospitals. Others raised particular local concerns. Some expressed the view that services were heading in the right direction but need to continue to improve.

The community generally welcomed the significant program of urban and regional road building over the last 10 years but some locations raised specific road quality or localised congestion challenges. Education and health services both received many positive comments, often based on personal experience. There were many mentions of the care and professionalism of front line staff in our hospitals, schools and other public services. There was recognition of existing service levels and outcomes currently being achieved, but also concerns about our ability to meet new and increasing demands.

The areas where the community most clearly wanted to see improvements were public transport and water. These concerns have been responded to with clear priorities in this State Plan. There are also significant investments planned to address these concerns. These have already been announced in the State Infrastructure Strategy and the Metropolitan Water Plan and will soon be detailed in the Premier's Urban Transport Statement.



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Challenges ahead

Key concerns for the future were the environment and the provision of infrastructure that support both economic growth and high quality Government services. This reflected a strong sense that we need to work together to ensure we build a better quality of life for the future.

Ranking of the priorities

The number one ranked priority from the draft Plan was access to quality health services, indicating the importance that the community places on access to high quality health care. There was strong support for priorities to reduce crime and promote harmonious communities indicating the high value we all place on keeping NSW a relatively safe place to live.

In city areas, there was high support for public transport due to its importance to our mobility, the economy, reducing road congestion and the environment. In contrast, rural and regional areas indicated that their overwhelming priority after health care was economic growth through business investment and the development of the local skills base.

The top five priorities from the draft Plan, as ranked by the community were:

1. Health services meet key national benchmarks for access and quality
2. Public transport meets reliability and safety targets
3. Reduce rates of crime
4. More harmonious communities through increased community participation
5. Cleaner air that meets national air quality standards and progress towards greenhouse gas reduction.



Community told Us

Acting on the feedback

The community feedback has driven a number of changes to the NSW State Plan. These changes can be grouped into two areas:

A focus on implementation

The community wants the Government to show how it will deliver the Plan. Many submissions asked what would be different about the follow up and reporting processes of this Plan. A number of people wanted to see how the Plan would link to existing and future plans in specific Government agencies or locations. Rural and regional communities wanted to know that the Plan would be delivered not just in Sydney, but right across the State. They wanted to know how they would be able to hold Government accountable locally.

In response, the State Plan now includes significant implementation detail in both chapter seven and chapter eight. Chapter seven delivers on the promise in the draft State Plan that the 'machinery of Government will be realigned to ensure that the focus is on achieving the priorities in the Plan'. It sets out significant reforms to structures of accountability within Government and details the ongoing reporting regime. Reforms to budgeting and planning processes are also detailed. Chapter eight examines local delivery. It provides a summary of the key issues across the regions and identifies how Government will operate at the regional level to address those priorities.

Changes to priorities

The NSW State Plan includes eight new priorities that are based on feedback from the community. They replace two draft priorities that have been incorporated within the new priorities:

■ A secure and sustainable water supply for all users

This priority has been separated from the priority for energy supply reliability in response to the significant community concern regarding water supply. The sustainability of the water supply through recycling, efficient use, and conservation has been explicitly incorporated

■ Better access to training in rural and regional NSW to support local economies

We received strong feedback that regional and rural areas rely on local skills development in order to stay competitive and attract investment

■ Maintain and invest in infrastructure to support our growing economy

This priority reflects the concern that many expressed regarding the need to properly maintain existing infrastructure and invest for the future. This priority includes the concerns that many raised regarding road infrastructure as well as other forms of infrastructure

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■ **Cutting red tape**

This priority replaces the draft priority 'A higher productivity economy'. We received clear feedback that in order to grow the level of business investment and increase productivity, Government needed to focus on reducing complexity and increasing predictability and speed across its regulatory regime

■ **Improved outcomes in mental health**

There was strong community support for the Government's recent commitments in mental health. It was considered appropriate to dedicate a specific priority to this issue

■ **Improve the efficiency of the road network**

This priority responds to concerns regarding roads. It incorporates the draft priority to increase the proportion of containerised freight carried on rail

■ **Improved health and educational outcomes for Aboriginal people**

We received strong feedback that the NSW Government needs to explicitly aim to reduce the disadvantages faced by the Aboriginal people of NSW

■ **Improve survival rates and quality of life for people with potentially fatal or chronic illness through improvements in health care**

Many community members commented on the quality of care they or a family member had received. It is important to maintain our focus on providing a health care system that meets the needs of seriously ill people.



Community told Us

Two priorities from the draft State Plan have been removed from the final State Plan, but elements of them remain key strategies for delivering our goals:

■ **A higher productivity economy**

We received feedback from business groups that productivity is driven by a range of factors, many of which are outside the control of Government. By contrast, regulatory reform that reduces red tape and promotes competition can drive productivity and support increased business investment. On this basis, the priority was replaced with a priority on red tape reduction

■ **Increased proportion of freight on rail**

This priority received mixed feedback. It was quite popular in some areas, particularly in web submissions, but not in others. There was some confusion on this priority. When it was understood that the focus was on containerised freight, this priority was not strongly supported in regional areas. Through discussions in the community forums it became clear that this priority was supported as a means of achieving cleaner air and reduced urban congestion in city areas, and improved road quality in regional areas. By introducing new priorities on congestion and infrastructure maintenance, this priority was no longer essential. It remains a key strategy in achieving these priorities.

Revised priorities and language

Many of the priorities have been amended to reflect the focus of the community. Some key changes include:

■ **Increased participation and integration in community activities**

This reflected strong feedback that people want a community where all members of the community participate together in a range of activities. This reflects a desire to foster greater understanding between groups by increasing the opportunities to interact and create friendships

■ **More students completing Year 12 or accredited vocational education**

This change was made to respond to feedback that vocational education should be recognised as an appropriate option for many students. It captures a strong community feeling that the education system should help all students fulfil their potential



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■ **Increased levels of attainment for all students**

This priority responds to feedback that the focus of the school system should be on both raising the standards of proficient students as well as specifically helping to improve the performance of students who are struggling to reach basic benchmarks

■ **Fairness and opportunity**

This group of priorities were formerly in the Service Delivery chapter. Due to strong demand that efforts to overcome disadvantage and promote social inclusion be recognised, they have been assigned their own chapter (Chapter 4). The notion of 'fairness' and 'opportunity' have been added to make explicit the Government's commitment that such services must be designed in order to maximise opportunities for community participation and control of one's own future

■ **Rights, respect and responsibility**

This area of activity has been renamed in response to feedback that our rights are important to protect. The community generally welcomed the recognition of this section that with rights come responsibilities and an expectation of mutually respectful behaviour

■ **Housing affordability**

This priority has been renamed from 'targets for housing and land supply achieved' to reflect the community's concerns regarding housing affordability. Respondents recognised that many of the factors that influence housing affordability are beyond the control of State Government, however the State can play a role by itself and in cooperation with other levels of government, in particular by ensuring a sufficient supply of housing and land and by supporting a strong social housing sector.

These changes are not the sum of the responses to the community feedback. Many of the individual priorities include actions or new directions that are based on feedback received.

The community consultations were a valuable exercise in getting feedback from people throughout NSW on what is important in their area and how the Government can address the issues identified. The community forums in particular were an enriching opportunity for Government Ministers and senior public servants to engage with people and jointly work through options and ideas.



Community told Us